

**University of North Carolina at Charlotte**  
**Faculty Ombuds Office Charter**  
**April 10, 2012**

**INTRODUCTION**

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNC Charlotte) Faculty Ombuds Office was established in the spring of 2012 to provide an alternative resource for the management, prevention, and resolution of conflicts involving the faculty of the University. The Ombuds Office provides a safe, informal environment where faculty may speak in confidence about issues of concern they encounter in conjunction with their jobs at UNC Charlotte. In all proceedings, the Ombudsperson shall be truthful and act with integrity, shall foster respect for all members of the University, and shall promote procedural fairness in the content and administration of the University's practices, processes, and policies.<sup>1</sup>

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of the UNC Charlotte Faculty Ombuds Office, in keeping with the cornerstone principles articulated by the International Ombudsman\* Association (IOA), is to provide an informal, impartial, independent, and to the extent allowable by law, confidential source of assistance to individuals or groups experiencing conflicts or who have complaints involving others at the University. The Ombudsperson assists faculty by listening to concerns, clarifying issues, explaining policies, articulating options, serving as a neutral party in resolving disputes, and providing referrals to other resources. Faculty are not required to use the Ombuds Office for informal resolution of conflict, and do so voluntarily.

The Ombudsperson has no authority or capacity to render decisions, alter policy, offer legal advice, or provide psychological counseling. The Ombudsperson does not conduct formal investigations or serve as an advocate or representative for any group or individual. Unless required by law, the Ombudsperson does not participate in any formal grievance, hearing, administrative or legal proceeding.

The Ombuds Office can assist those interested in making formal complaints through referrals to other offices or channels at the University, but the Office is not designed to receive formal notice of complaints on behalf of the University and should not be used in that way.

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<sup>1</sup> *Code of Ethics*, International Ombudsman Association. Retrieved February 15, 2012 from <http://www.ombudsassociation.org/about-us/code-ethics>

## **ETHICAL PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE OMBUDSPERSON<sup>2</sup>**

### **Independence**

The Ombuds Office is independent in structure, function, and appearance to the highest degree possible within the organization.

### **Neutrality and Impartiality**

The Ombudsperson, as a designated neutral, remains unaligned and impartial. The Ombudsperson does not engage in any situation which could create a conflict of interest.

### **Confidentiality**

The Ombudsperson holds all communications with those seeking assistance in confidence, and does not disclose confidential communications unless given permission to do so. The only exception to this assertion of a privilege of confidentiality is where there appears to be imminent risk of serious harm, or where abuse or neglect of a child or disabled adult is suspected, or if otherwise required by law.

### **Informality**

The Ombudsperson, as an informal resource, resists testifying in any formal proceeding, asserting the confidential nature of communications with the Ombuds Office.

## **STANDARDS OF PRACTICE**

The Ombudsperson will operate under the IOA Code of Ethics, IOA Standards of Practice and IOA Best Practices, all of which are available on the Ombuds Office website at <http://ombuds.uncc.edu> and at <http://www.ombudsassociation.org/about-us/code-ethics>, and <http://www.ombudsassociation.org/about-us/mission-vision-and-values/ia-best-practices-standards-practice>.

### **Constituents**

Access to the services of the UNC Charlotte Faculty Ombuds Office is limited to currently-employed full-time faculty and administrators holding faculty rank.

### **Reporting**

The Faculty Ombuds Office reports to the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

### **Qualifications of the Ombudsperson**

The Ombudsperson will be a tenured member of the faculty who has undergone formal training through the IOA. The Ombudsperson must follow the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the IOA.

The Ombudsperson must participate in continuing professional education during his or her term of office. As a minimum, the person selected as the Ombudsperson should have

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<sup>2</sup> *Code of Ethics*, International Ombudsman Association. Retrieved February 15, 2012 from <http://www.ombudsassociation.org/about-us/code-ethics>

good listening and communication skills, be fair-minded, diplomatic, comfortable speaking to people with varying backgrounds, and sensitive to issues of diversity.

### **Term of Office**

The Ombudsperson will serve a three-year renewable term. The position will require a commitment of 50% effort. Although most faculty are on nine-month contracts, conflicts requiring resolution may require attention during the summer months. To accommodate the need for access during the summer, a stipend will be provided for the Ombudsperson.

### **Selection of the Ombudsperson**

The Faculty Executive Committee (FEC), acting as a committee of the whole or by appointing a nominating committee, will recommend one or more tenured members of the faculty who meet the specified qualifications to the Provost. In order to provide adequate time for training, the Provost's decision about renewal of an Ombudsperson's term should be completed one year prior to the conclusion of the Ombudsperson's term. Should the Provost elect not to renew an Ombudsperson's term, or to reject the initial candidate(s) recommended by the FEC, the FEC shall submit a new candidate or candidates to the Provost for consideration via the process described above. Final selection of the Ombudsperson and any subsequent renewals of an existing Ombudsperson will be made by the Provost.

### **Relationship to the University Mediation Coordinator (UMC)**

The Ombudsperson may serve simultaneously in the role of UMC.

### **Accountability and Evaluation**

The Ombudsperson will provide to the Provost an annual self-evaluation and statement of goals for the coming year. The Ombuds Office will maintain records of the number of faculty who use services of the Ombuds Office as well as types of consultations. The Ombuds Office will provide a written report annually to the Provost describing broad categories of issues brought to the attention of the Ombuds Office. The Office will also develop an evaluation form to allow for feedback from those who consult the Office and to provide summary information to the Provost on satisfaction with the Office.

Complaints about the Ombuds Office should be directed to the Provost or to the President of Faculty Counsel.

### **Record Keeping**

Personally identifiable records kept by the Ombuds Office will be maintained in accordance with the North Carolina Public Records Act. Records that are not personally identifiable will be used for statistical analysis and reporting of trends to the University.

### **RETALIATION FOR USING THE OMBUDS OFFICE**

All faculty will have the right to consult the Ombudsman without reprisal. Policy Statement #129, Reporting and Investigation of Suspected Improper Activities and Whistleblower Protection (<http://legal.uncc.edu/policies/ps-129.html>), including the

whistleblower protection provided in that policy, is applicable to faculty members who consult with the Ombudsperson regarding any Improper Activities, as that term is defined in Policy Statement #129.

\*"The term ombudsman is used to communicate to the widest possible community and is not intended to discourage others from using alternatives. IOA respectfully acknowledges that many practitioners use alternative forms of this word." International Ombudsman Association (<http://www.ombudsassociation.org/>).